

Thea News

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 2 2003



I am grateful to them for making me realize in a new way that I am an African American...

I feel a responsibility to share in every way I can the insight, beauty, wholeness, and spirituality I saw in the African people with my American brothers and sisters of all colors.

In the above quote, Sister Thea reflects on her 1985 trip to Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria.

The quote is excerpted from the article "Sister Bowman Touches Her African Roots," by Beatrice Njemanze, from *Mississippi Today*, Sept. 13, 1985.

Thea's Spirit Transforms Artist

by Beth Erickson

“It took death to knock life into me,” says Brother Michael “Mickey” McGrath. An Oblate of St. Francis DeSales, Brother Mickey lost both of his parents by the time he was 34. Only four short years separated the death of his mother and father, and the pain of the losses left him reeling. Recognizing his own mortality, he found himself re-evaluating his life. What he realized is that he was often unhappy in his career.

Since teaching was his order's primary ministry, he'd spent nine years at Allentown College, now DeSales University, at the request of his community. After his parents died, he found himself tired of the challenges of teaching and hungering to recall the happiness of making art.



Brother Mickey McGrath's first Thea painting, "Rise Up Shepherds and Follow," was inspired by Thea's 1989 talk to the U.S. Conference of Bishops.

"I had no energy at the end of the day. I was really aching to make more art. I remember teaching one spring day, teaching art history on a Friday afternoon, and thinking I had to get out of there. I raced down the hall and called the number for an artists'/photographers' retreat in Ireland. It happened to be the cut-off date and they had only one spot left," said Brother Mickey.

He quit his teaching job with the blessing of his superior and embarked on an artist's journey.

When he returned from the Dingle Peninsula of Ireland,

Brother Mickey was ready to set the world on fire with his artwork. But, after painting a series of landscapes, he was more discouraged than ever. "I painted landscapes for years and never liked them. I was always unhappy. Not all artists should be angst-ridden as I'd thought."

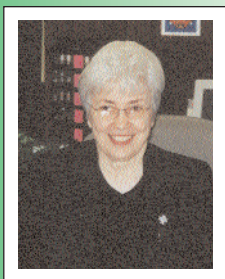
Then, one day, something remarkable happened. He saw a video about Sister Thea Bowman, *Her Own Story*, and remembered reading about her in *U.S. Catholic* by his dying father's bedside. Brother Mickey was so taken by the black Catholic from Mississippi who inspired the U.S. bishops to stand, hold hands, and sing "We Shall Overcome" that his artwork changed overnight. "It flowed out of me. I'd never had that experience before. It seemed like a different person created them. Suddenly, I knew religious art was what I wanted to do. The world doesn't need another bad landscape," he said.

"Artist's Life Transformed" continued on page 3

From the TBL Coordinator

September 1, 2003

Photo: Jolyce Greteman, FSPA



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Dear Friends of Thea,

And then there were three! In the March 2003 issue of *Thea News*, we described two stained glass windows featuring Sister Thea Bowman: one in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, De Pere, Wis. (2000) and one in St. Benedict the African Church, Chicago (2002). Now a Cleveland reader of *Thea News* tells us Thea is commemorated in stained glass in that city.

Besides gracing stained-glass windows, Thea has been sharing her lively spirit in California. This past year during a sabbatical at the Franciscan School of Theology (FST) in Berkeley, Sister Marla Lang, immediate past-president of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA), encountered significant Thea interest. Sister Marla is a FSPA classmate and friend of Thea.

At FST, Sister Marla gave popular Thea presentations entitled: "Sister Thea Bowman—A Shining Light and Christian Model for Today." Thea is known for helping bring the richness of black culture, spirituality, equality, and community to church and society. At an all-school liturgy, FST honored Thea's memory by enshrining Marshall Bouldin's 1989 Thea portrait there.

A parish study for her Contextual Theology class led Sister Marla to the Sister Thea Bowman Manor (TBM)—offspring of St. Columba Parish, Oakland—a senior citizen (or younger for the mobility-impaired), 55-unit apartment complex. Subsidized by HUD and developed by the parish, the manor is managed by Christian Homes. Dedicated in 1990, the building was named after Thea because she inspired many in Oakland. Currently the manor has a two-year waiting list. In 2002, HUD approved an \$8 million addition with 45 new apartments. Construction begins June 2004.

Said Sister Marla, "During my visit Administrator Sharon Jacob and Assistant Administrator Gayle Dickson shared an expansive array of Thea newspaper clippings collected over the years. We viewed an informal video of the first-year anniversary celebration of TBM. I departed knowing Thea's passionate energy for 'the old folks' flows from Sharon and Gayle. I know I have met two outstanding women leaders. Sister Thea can be proud as patron of the manor!"

Sister Marla also went to the Prescott-Joseph Center for Community Enhancement in St. Patrick Parish, Oakland. Formerly a convent for the St. Joseph Sisters, the building houses community tutoring, literacy, job training, computer education, preventive health programs and projects led by Washington Burns, M.D. An innovative feature is the towering palms-shaded outdoor theatre—named for our well-loved Sister Thea Bowman. In May, *SAINT: The Thea Bowman Story* written by dramatist and poet, Ayodele Nzinga, premiered in "Thea's theatre."

Looking Ahead...

March 30, 2004
4th annual Thea Bowman
[Flavor of Soul] commemoration

Thea smiles at all she has wrought in the Bay Area!

Finally, you know we love to hear from our readers. Some tell us they "read every word in each issue." Thea continues to be a blessing. Let us know your stories about encounters with Thea.

Charlene Smith, FSPA



L-r: FST President William Cieslak, OFM, Cap.; Marla Lang FSPA; and FST Director of Spiritual Formation Ramona Miller, OSF, displaying Marshall Bouldin's Thea portrait. Photo provided by Marla Lang, FSPA.



Sharon Jacob and Rev. M. Gayle Dickson (South Berkeley Community Church) stand by the "Three Faces of Thea" by Kayne Matthews. Photo by Marla Lang, FSPA.

Students See the Apostle in Thea

by Beth Erickson

Last semester, students in Professor Virginia Pharr's Scripture class at Viterbo University found a great deal of similarities between Sister Thea Bowman and the apostle Paul. Professor Pharr used the "Flavor of Soul" event in conjunction with her class on Paul. She encouraged students to attend the event and search for comparisons between the modern-day saint and the former apostle. Among other things, students noted a name change for each at their time of conversion, both felt called by God, both preached and used examples from their own lives, and both worked to unite people. Here are some of their comments:

"Paul worked in his missionary journeys to spread the Word to all races, creeds, and religions...Similarly, Sister Thea emphasized that we are all the Church. She

included people of all races and religions, including some people who are strongly influenced by the Buddhist religion. She worked to use her minority status to bring about a change and bring openness and understanding."

"On his travels, Paul was stricken with an unknown illness that kept him from completing some of his goals. However, Paul pressed on in his duties. Sister Bowman was diagnosed with cancer, and like Paul, kept her faith and pressed on spreading the Word of God."

"[Paul] also believed like [Thea] that all people were equal and deserved to hear the Gospel. No one, regardless of race or religion, was left out of their teaching and care." •

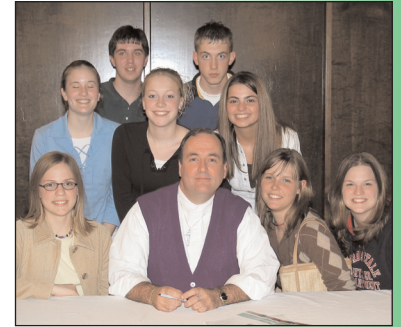


Photo: Beth Erickson

Always personable, Brother Mickey McGrath was a hit with Viterbo University students during his "Flavor of Soul" talk about Thea.

"Artist's Life Transformed by Thea" continued from page 1

The first painting he did was of Sister Thea inspiring the bishops at the 1989 National Conference of Catholic Bishops. The other nine paintings of Thea were done within a two-week period. The vivid colors, vibrancy, and sense of movement in each piece have created a unique type of Catholic religious artwork—one that adds color and drama.

"I wanted to rid the world of the Barbie and Ken image in the Bible and in religious art," he said. "Sister Thea taught me that the world doesn't need any more bad art. The world needs the gifts that are in your heart," he said.

Brother Mickey's gifts were able to shine through because of a unique combination of grief and Thea's inspiration. "When pain enters your life, it never enters alone. Pain always comes with grace. The reason the heart is broken is so that the light can get through. That's what makes us beautiful. Art had helped me through the process of grieving. I got a new take on my talent," he added.

As a result, McGrath feels a unique bond with Sister Thea, despite the fact that he never met her. "Someone once told me I have a black soul." That

soul, he believes, is Thea. She provides him with inspiration and guidance. He considers her his patron saint and calls on her when he needs a hand. "I like to think of her as a friend— someone you'd have dinner with and laugh with and talk to."

Thanks to her life story, Brother Mickey has found his mission, which has led him to create a series of religious art and an artist's studio, Bee Still (www.beestill.com); to author and illustrate a patron saint book series; to be a retreat and workshop leader; and to become a popular speaker on the life of Sister Thea.

"Sister Thea was something special and her experience needs to be heard. She was indeed the sort who finds her way into the hearts of people who knew her or who learn about her," he said. It is that spirit of Thea that McGrath hopes to keep sharing with folks around the world so that they too may one day be inspired by the "little light" from Canton, Miss. •



After his talk, Brother Mickey visited with Lee Etta James Clark, a Holy Child Jesus School classmate of Thea's. Her sister, Jeanette Wilson, stands beside her. Both Lee Etta and Jeanette are from Chicago. Photo by Katie Mitchell, FSPA.



Photo: Beth Erickson

Brother McGrath's talk was sprinkled with many spirituals. Viterbo Religious Studies Professor Earl Madary, center, sang "Ain't Got Time to Die" with the Viterbo Concert Choir led by Thea-friend Daniel Johnson-Wilmot, far left.

Tatuonana, Ndade! (Until

by Eva Marie Lumas, SSS

In 1985, I left Africa with fond memories. The people were gracious and hospitable. Their lifestyle was unencumbered. Their primary interests were people-centered. Their interactions were unpretentious and always seemed to express some profound wisdom about life and the world. And, oh yes, their song was powerful and compelling. I had travelled to Lesotho, Kenya, and Nigeria. In each place, I'd been received with the same greeting, "Welcome home!" And, each time, I'd been sent on my way with the same words, "Come back to us!" Since 1985, I had longed to return to Africa. I did in September 1988.

The Maryknoll Sisters in the East African regions of Kenya and Tanzania invited Thea Bowman, FSPA, to be one of the presenters at their bi-annual, five-day Spirit Assembly. Thea was asked to choose another black sister to work with her. Thea asked me. The topic was "Racism in Ministry."

For the eight months prior to our departure, my thoughts and emotions were in constant

flux. Intellectually, I was eager to be part of Maryknoll's attempt to enhance their 40-year ministry in East Africa (45 sisters worked in the Kenyan-Tanzanian region then; two of them were black, none of them were African). At the same time, I knew well that the topic of racism often aroused strong defenses and resentment if not open hostility.

On top of all that, I found myself wondering what I could possibly offer to Thea's insight and talent. She was an internationally known scholar, teacher, singer, Folk Laureate, and legend. She was regarded by American Black Catholics as "our national treasure" before being interviewed by *60 Minutes* and before Harry Belafonte's interest in producing a movie about her life. My mind raced with thoughts. I wanted to make a contribution to Thea's wisdom and brilliance.

Emotionally, I vacillated between excitement and anxiety. I was not only returning to Africa, but I was going with one of my favorite people. And, most of all, I'd be a part of Thea's dream to return

to Africa before her cancer made the travel impossible. Then, my excitement would wane. Besides the anxiety over the workshop, I feared for Thea. Spinal cancer had her in constant pain and confined to a wheelchair. Her white blood cell count was so low she was susceptible to every infection. She lapsed into extreme fatigue at times. She was on a strict diet. My head and heart began to swim with questions. What if her wheelchair didn't arrive? What if there was no handicapped access to buildings? Who would carry her up and down stairs? How would she sit for the 24-hour plane trip? How would she sit for the seven-hour ride to Nairobi, Kenya, to Arusha, Tanzania, on bumpy roads? What if all of our friends were right—she was too sick and should not go? What if she died in Africa?

Some of my anxiety was purely selfish. What if her doctor decided at the last moment that she couldn't go? Who would replace her (as if that were possible)? What if we got there and she was too weak to work?

During the summer, I watched Thea, prayed with her, talked with her, and laughed with her. Our discussions about Africa seemed to tap a hidden energy and strength. She was resolved to go if it was at all possible. During that time, I resolved to do what I could to get her there and to let the Lord take care of the rest. I asked a friend to finance Sister Dorothy (Dort) Kunder's trip. Dort, a member of Thea's religious community, had helped to care for Thea's parents in the later years of their lives. Dort lived with and cared for Thea in the four years since her cancer was diagnosed. Dort would not only be able to care for Thea, but she would be able to share in Thea's dream to make the trip. I asked another friend to finance Sister Marie de Porres Taylor's trip. Marie was the Holy Name sister that I lived with. She could step in if Thea was unable to work when we got there.

With a considerable amount of soul searching on my part, I knew that I didn't fear what might happen to Thea's health in Africa. She and her doctor would have to decide if she could go. I had to decide if I wanted to share a momentous event in Thea's life. I decided that I did. On Sept. 18, Marie and I met Thea and Dort in the Amsterdam airport. We were on our way to Africa.

On the plane, Marie and I couldn't wait to go to sleep. We had spent the previous week touring Paris

Photo: 1988 FSPA Archives



Thea's pride in her heritage was evidenced by her African attire as well as her commitment to inter-cultural ministry.

We Meet Again, Sister!)

and several cities in Holland. Thea and Dort were also weary from the first leg of their trip. They had left Mississippi in the early afternoon of the 17th. Thea was visibly in pain. In addition to the discomfort of sitting for 24 hours, she was having a reaction to the chemotherapy treatment she'd had on the 16th. While Marie and Dort and I slept for most of the eight hours it took to fly to Nairobi, Thea practiced her French with the African woman and child who sat next to her.

We arrived in Nairobi at 10:30 p.m. Thea's wheelchair was somewhere in Holland. Three Maryknoll sisters had come to meet us: Janet, Maureen, and Norma (one of the three black Maryknoll sisters we know and the one who had initiated the workshop). We were each given a *khanga* (an African cloth to be used as a skirt, shawl, or scarf). Norma's face registered her alarm at Thea's physical condition. Norma had not seen Thea in three years. At that time, Thea's cancer was in arrest. She was 40 pounds heavier, moving around with her strong, determined walk, had a full head of braided hair, and generally looked as if she could move a train by the power of her will alone. Now, she was slumped in a chair, her bald head covered with a scarf, her eyes were red with fatigue, her face was swollen and any attempt to move was timid and obviously painful. We drove to Maryknoll's World Section House in relative silence. Everyone was exhausted. Everyone, except Thea, was also somewhat afraid.

The next morning, I was awakened by Thea's laughter. She was up, walking around the kitchen, making her breakfast. I could hear her teasing Norma and catching up on the three years since they'd seen each other. I got out of bed when I heard her ask, in a loud voice, if I was going to sleep all day. When I got to the kitchen, Thea had a laugh to share: The word had already gone out that she "had come to Africa with her own white nurse (Dort)," but the sisters couldn't figure out which one of us it was.

We had six days in Nairobi before leaving for Arusha to do the workshop. One afternoon, Sister Pearl brought the women she worked with to visit. They sang and danced for us. Thea sang and the rest of us danced with them. It was Thea who first began to cry. She expressed her gratitude for their sharing. She expressed her pain that she had

returned to the home of her ancestors, but she could not speak their language. She expressed her sorrow that her physical condition did not allow her to accept the invitation to visit their homes.

We spent many hours that week in Thea's room, sharing among ourselves. Dort kept trying to chase us out of the room so Thea could rest. Thea would wait until Dort left to call us back in. An extrovert to the extreme, Thea seemed to draw her strength from all the activity. We seemed to draw our strength from her.

A few of us spent two hours one afternoon making a rough outline of issues to be addressed in the workshop. For the first time in my life, I didn't feel compelled to seclude myself and write down every word I might want to say in a workshop. In the eight years that I'd known Thea, I'd learned that once you'd done your reading and reflection anymore than a loose outline is over preparation. I also knew that if she didn't think you could do something, she wouldn't ask you to do it. Beyond that, I'd learned Thea could call forth gifts from people that they never knew they had, myself included. Thea's confidence made you self-confident. Thea's care made you believe that you couldn't fail, and, more importantly, her care made you know that a failure is only a temporary obstacle that could and would be overcome. We talked about the tension we felt from the white Maryknoll sisters. Some tiptoed around us. Others went out of their way to show us how racially and culturally sensitive they were. Still others were naturally and delightfully themselves.

On Sept. 24, we left by car for Arusha. Along the road, we stopped to photograph the wildlife. Giraffes, gazelles, zebras, ostriches, wildebeasts, impalas, and birds of every kind could be seen from the car. Driving through Masai villages gave us time to barter for gifts, admire their craftsmanship, and experience a people for whom technology and western lifestyles are not even a curiosity. Thea caused quite a stir with the Masai. Because she was bald, as many Masai women are, they kept asking what clan she was from. Finally, convinced that she was a black American with uncertain African parentage, Masai of different clans gave her jewelry with the colors of their clan

"Tatuonana, Ndade" continued on page 7



Eva Marie Lumas, SSS

A Sister of Social Service, Eva Marie Lumas is a consultant and assistant professor of faith and culture at the Franciscan School of Theology in Berkeley, Calif. Sister Thea Bowman was her teacher and academic advisor during graduate school at the Institute for Black Catholic Studies in New Orleans.

Over the years, they became dear friends. Eva Marie stated that Sister Thea also was "my spiritual director, a ministerial mentor, and my most significant role model as a black woman religious."

Together, they served on the Board of Directors for the National Black Sisters' Conference and on the Policy Committee for the Institute of Black Catholic Studies.

Thea Notes . . .

Book Celebrates Black Catholic Families

"I hope that church groups and families will read it together, will

contemplate and understand, adapt, and use it together. I hope it will help you think, pray, play, dream, plan, yearn, act, live, learn, and celebrate together as family," said Thea Bowman, FSPA, in her introduction to the book *Families:*

Black and Catholic, Catholic and Black, first published in 1985.

Produced by the U.S. Bishops' Department of Education, and edited by Sr. Thea, this landmark book was designed to help black families understand and strengthen their roots, traditions, and rituals. It encourages them to think, talk, and discuss their faith, their dreams, their goals, and their plans. After more than 15 years in publication, this book's lessons remain timeless—encouraging black families and communities to share themselves, their culture, and their heritage with the Church.

The 180-page *Families* can be ordered through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops at www.nccbuscc.org/publishing/multicultural/african.htm. The cost is \$15.95.

New Charter School Takes Thea's Name

There's a new school in Gary, Ind., that's breaking with the traditional education format.

Appropriately, the new school's name is taken from the black Franciscan sister known for

changing people's perceptions and getting them to think in new and different ways.

The Thea Bowman Leadership Academy Charter School is a public school in Gary that opened this past August. With longer than average school days and a longer school year plus unique approaches to curriculum, the charter school is offering a different style of learning than has previously been available thanks to leeway granted to charter schools by the Indiana Legislature.

What's more, teacher selection, compensation, and retention are based on the academic performance of the school's students. Currently serving grades K-6, the school hopes to offer education through the eighth grade down the road. There is no tuition as it is a public school.

Created by the non-profit Drexel Foundation, the Thea Bowman Leadership Academy Charter School already has its own Web site, www.bowmancharter-school.org.

A Spring of Celebration

"Flavor of Soul" certainly wasn't the only celebration of Sister Thea Bowman's life this past year. And, because each was focused on one of Thea's great passions—music—they would have made her smile brightly.

The first was held on the anniversary of her death, March 30, at Queen of the Most Holy Rosary Church in Rockville, N.Y. Sponsored by the Ministry to Catholic of African Ancestry of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, the Diocesan Gospel Choir led a large group in a rous-

ing gospel concert. The 65-member choir marked the life and times of Sister Thea Bowman.

Then, on April 6, the Sister Thea Bowman Diocesan Catholic School in East St. Louis, Ill., held their annual spring concert.

Each year, the event culminates the year and offers the students a way to worship God in song and dance. As the school's newsletter states, "Sister Thea Bowman, looking down on us, is surely proud of her little ones on spring concert day when they live the charism she shared with the world in her public ministry. Her charism was truly to praise God with heart and song."

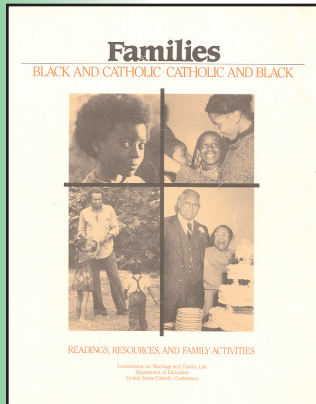
Thea House Builds Goodwill on College Campus

Bennett College and NC A&T State University have established a Catholic campus connection between their two institutions and named it Thea House.

Considered a building for "our spiritual future," Thea House has many aims for students. Its staff is dedicated to providing:

- ♦ Spiritual and intellectual assistance to students, faculty and staff.
- ♦ A fair and faithful representation of the Catholic Church.
- ♦ A religious celebration that highlights the African-American experience.
- ♦ Dialogue between the campus community and the larger religious community.
- ♦ A place to meet and a center of goodwill for all people.

For more information on Thea House, call (336) 272-5868 or email theahouse1@juno.com. •



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as a way of claiming her as their own. Her gratitude was expressed with tears.

When we arrived at the Danish Volunteer Center, we put Thea on a bed and six of us carried her to her room. The room was inaccessible by either car or her wheelchair (which finally arrived). Thea was embarrassed by all the attention. We photographed the event and told her to think of herself as the Queen of Sheba being carried to see Solomon. She laughed, straightened her *khanga*, and changed her posture and said, “Oh, honey, lead on!” I still don’t believe that she is aware of how privileged we were to do something for her as an expression of our love.

The week in Arusha was also filled with visitors who sang and danced. Again, Thea’s room became the center of activity. Our circle of friends had grown. Most often, we spoke of our common struggle to reclaim the heritage that was obscured by colonization and the slave trade. These gatherings were like the special moments at the family reunion when you savor, nurture, and replenish your ties with your favorite cousins.

The workshop itself was a success. Tensions were dispelled at the first session. Thea led us in prayer. She sang of the religious heritage of people of African descent. She reviewed the doctrines on the Church’s missionary activity and the pastoral letters on cultural pluralism and racism. She spoke of Maryknoll’s mission statement. She did not accuse or blame. She did not remove herself from Maryknoll’s responsibility to deal with racism in their community. She had come as their sister in faith. She had come because of her love of Africa and her gratitude for the people who spent their lives sharing the Gospel there. She had come on behalf of all descendents of Africa who bore the scar and suffered the consequences of racial oppression. Thea’s manner, words, and song exuded four primary beliefs: The evil of racism was a part of the human condition; all of us participate in the human condition; all of us share the responsibility for the future of humanity; and, if we steeped ourselves in

the legacy of our faith, allowed ourselves to be interdependent, and respected each others’ honest efforts to address the issues, we had the power to expel any evil from our midst. Thea was not only teaching white Maryknoll missionaries about intercultural ministry, she was teaching all of us—white and black.

Over the course of those few days, the depth of sharing and self-disclosure exceeded our expectations. I had not overestimated Thea’s ability to call forth the best from people. But, I had learned anew how skillfully she could do it. The Maryknoll sisters faced themselves with painful honesty. Each of us owned our own responsibility for participating in and perpetrating racial oppression. We asked each other for forgiveness. We asked each other for assistance. We identified people and strategies to help us deal with racism in the future. We celebrated the presence and power of God in Africa. We committed ourselves to participate in God’s will and purposes for Africa. We celebrated the gift of God we had received through Thea.

On Sept. 30, we were on our way back to America. Each of us was laden with gifts of remembrance. We were told to “come home again soon.” Publicly, I was entrusted with the task of organizing our next trip. In private conversation, I was assigned to the duty of contacting everyone in the event Thea died before we could return.

Over the next few months, I’d spoken to Thea several times on the telephone. In mid-October, we visited for a few hours in San Jose after one of her workshops. She was still traveling the country doing revivals, lecturing, and holding workshops (some 125 trips a year). Her white blood cell count was low; her cancer was high. She said it was only when she was singing that she was not in pain. She died on March 30, 1990.

I wonder if she knew that her song had removed the pain, healed the sickness and broken the chains of many? I wonder if she knew that her life was her song?

Tatuonana, Ndade! •

Thea Bowman 1937-1990



Photo: Patricia Tekippe, FSPA

Sister Thea (nee Bertha Bowman) was a native of Canton, Miss., and the granddaughter of a slave. At age 9 she chose to become Catholic and then attended a new mission school taught by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. At 15, she went to La Crosse, Wis., to become a Franciscan Sister.

She is known for helping bring the richness of black culture and spirituality, as well as the message of community and equality, to the Catholic Church and to society.

A scholar, teacher, singer, poet, storyteller, preacher, and performer, Thea traveled the country, spreading her message in hundreds of venues. She developed breast cancer at 46, but continued her public appearances choosing, as she said, “to live until I die.” She died in 1990 at 52.

Want to read Thea News on the Web?

You'll find it at:
www.fspa.org/
whoweare and
clicking on
"FSPA News."



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From Those Who Knew Sister Thea...

"I am an African sister of a Benedictine order here in South Africa. In 1991, one sister from the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, Pa., came to visit us here in South Africa. Then, she said to me when I make my temporary profession, I must take the name Thea, because in our congregation, we change names. Then, on the 26 Sept. 1992, I made it and took the name [Thea]. So, that sister has given me the [videos] of the late Sister Thea Bowman including the one of her funeral and while she was in the hospital. I truly like them, and I used to sit down and look at them. I can say they built me."

Sister Thea Mkhiza, OSB
South Africa



"My claim to fame is: I kissed Thea Bowman. At a 'Praise Him' conference at Douglaston, Thea did her usual wonderful things. I was impressed. Later, at Mass, she sat in the pew across the aisle from me. When we stood to say the 'Our Father,' I went into the aisle and took her hand. After the 'Our Father,' people dropped hands, and I didn't let her hand go. I simply stood there smiling at her and holding her hand. She turned to me with a little frown on her face. Then, she smiled, put her arms around me, and hugged me, a little old bald white man. I kissed her. That was one of the best 'signs of peace' I've ever experienced."

Louis C. Sandberg, Deacon
Baldwin, N.Y. •